

Chairman Roberts and Members of the Committee.

My name is Karen Erdie, Director of the Area Agency in Roundup

Ombudsman are advocates for people residing in long-term care settings. In Montana we currently have 131 nursing homes/Critical Access Hospitals and 191 Assisted Living facilities. These facilities range from Ekalaka to Eureka; Dillon and Hamilton to Scobey and Plentywood.

Local Long Term Care Ombudsman are hired by Area Agencies on Aging. Within the Area Agencies there are only 13.64 Full-time equivalents statewide to:

- 1) provide monthly facility visits to meet with residents**
- 2) investigate and resolve complaints on behalf of the residents and/or their legal representatives; and 3) inform the residents and family members of ways to obtain the services for which they are entitled.**

*** With the increase of 52 Assisted Living facilities in the last ten years, there has been an increased demand for Ombudsman services. The number of cases the Ombudsman investigates every year has increased exponentially as the number of facilities in the state increases.**

***Two of our Area Agencies have been able to utilize volunteers (Missoula, Area II-Roundup); but the Older Americans Act does not permit volunteers to conduct investigations. The coordination of any expanded volunteer service would require additional training, coordination and supervision.**

The responsibilities of the Ombudsman program require that time be spent in direct contact with the consumer living within a long-term care facility. Ombudsman mileage over the past year exceeds 300,000 miles in order to provide the facility visits and complete the investigations.

Increased program needs with associated funding would be at least \$200,000 of additional funding to meet the following needs:

- *On-going training to address the complexity of investigations**
- *Increased funding for transportation in order to maintain facility visits and complaint investigations**
- *With the growing number of facilities, potential residents, family members and current residents continue to need printed program materials (resident rights manuals, Assisted Living and Nursing Home brochures).**